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# THE QUARTERLY

OF THE

TEXAS STATE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION.

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## REMINISCENCES OF SION R. BOSTICK.<sup>1</sup>

STATE OF TEXAS,  
COUNTY OF SAN SABA.

Know all men by these presents: That I, Sion Record Bostick, a resident citizen of the county and State aforesaid, being over eighty years old and feeling the infirmities naturally incident to old age, and being desirous of perpetuating testimony that may be of interest to future historians of Texas, do make the following statement:

I came to Texas in 1828 while a mere boy, scarcely ten years of age. My father belonged to Austin's colony and settled first in the red lands of Eastern Texas, in what is now known as Shelby county. I very well remember that the country was covered with grass as high as the sides of a horse. The woods were full of deer, panthers, leopard cats, wolves, bear, and turkeys. The Indians then in that part of the country were friendly.

<sup>1</sup>This narrative was presented to the Association, at the request of Mr. Bostick, by Joel F. Brown, Esq., of San Saba county, Texas. The evidence relative to the details of the capture of Santa Anna is very conflicting, as will appear from the notes. These, except the three signed by the editor, have been prepared at his request by Mr. E. W. Winkler.—EDITOR QUARTERLY.

The next year, 1829, we removed to old San Felipe on the Brazos river, where the land office was located. All the land grants and donations were signed up at Monclova.<sup>1</sup>

In 1831 and 1832, the colonists had trouble with the coast Indians. They were large Indians, very warlike, and fierce fighters; but there were few of them, and they were soon annihilated.<sup>2</sup> About the close of the Carankawa Indian troubles, the Comanche Indians became hostile. They were quite numerous, and on most of their raids they were on horseback. Being excellent riders they found it easy to mount themselves, as the country was full of wild horses. The settlers had excellent horses brought from the old States, and these Indians dearly loved, on moonshiny nights, to steal these gentle horses. Several times they set my folks afoot by stealing all the horses we had. In such cases the settlers were compelled to buy horses from the Mexican traders. Their horses were small, but hardy, and could live entirely on grass. Most farmers used oxen in breaking land and cultivating their farms.

In 1832 my father moved from San Felipe to the Colorado river where Columbus is now situated, and it was at this place that we suffered most from Indian raids.

My father died in 1833.

There were then no schools, and there was but little preaching. In 1834 my mother employed an Irishman by the name of Lovelady to teach school at her house. The children of neighbors attended. This was my first school experience, and I must say that the Irish school teacher believed in that good old Bible doctrine, "Spare the

<sup>1</sup>To colonists, introduced by *empresarios*, titles were issued upon the certificate of the *empresario* by the commissioner appointed by the State legislature; titles were issued directly to individuals by the government only when these individuals wished to purchase lands lying without *empresario* grants. See *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I 802.

Monclova had been declared the capital of the State as early as September 25, 1828. However, the capital remained at Saltillo until 1833, when Monclova was decreed such a second time. A revolution resulted. Texas recognized the government at Monclova as the legal one. (*Laws and Decrees of Coahuila and Texas*, 107, 207; Brown, *History of Texas*, I 260.)

<sup>2</sup>This is rather overstating the facts. There was a remnant of them in Texas as late as 1847. See *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, I 727.—  
EDITOR QUARTERLY.

rod, and spoil the child." As he did not want to spoil the wild frontier boys, he never spared the rod; but he made us toe a mark, behave ourselves, and learn our lessons.

My school days soon ended. In 1835 the colonists began to be alarmed at the violations of their rights as colonists. As regards the causes, I was too young to understand them. The Mexicans came down to Gonzales about two hundred<sup>1</sup> strong to take a small cannon that had been left there. There were about one hundred<sup>2</sup> Texans there, and we resisted. After a volley or two, in which a few were wounded, but none killed,<sup>3</sup> the Mexicans went back to San Antonio, and they did not preserve good order in that retreat.

The rumors of war swept over the country, and the volunteers came in until several hundred had got together. I became a soldier, and joined Captain Splann's company. Stephen F. Austin was in command<sup>4</sup> of the troops that had gathered there, and Colonel Travis was with them.

The forces were divided.<sup>5</sup> The advance guard, or first detachment, had been attacked<sup>6</sup> by soldiers from the Alamo at Concepcion, and the Mexicans had been defeated when the force to which I belonged joined the first detachment.

<sup>1</sup>Authorities vary greatly as to the number of the Mexican troops (cavalry). The estimates run from twenty-five by Linn (*Reminiscences*, 107) to three hundred by "An Old Soldier" (*Texas Almanac for 1861*, 61). The weight of evidence is to the effect that there were not more than two hundred, and probably much less.

<sup>2</sup>Probably a few more.

<sup>3</sup>David B. Malcomb says, in a letter written from Gonzales a few days after the battle: "It is believed that one or two Mexicans were wounded or killed by the advance guard at the first onset, and a very considerable number killed and wounded by the discharge of the cannon (Foote's *Texas and the Texans*, II 101). "An Old Soldier" says the Mexicans took their killed and wounded with them (*Texas Almanac for 1861*, 62), while Brown (*History of Texas*, I 350) says they left four dead on the field. The Texans lost not a man.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen F. Austin arrived at Gonzales about noon, October 11, and was elected commander-in-chief the same afternoon (*Comp. Hist.*, I 540).

<sup>5</sup>October 27.

<sup>6</sup>October 28.

We had but one little old cannon, the one we had at Gonzales, which was about a four-pounder.<sup>1</sup> General Austin told us that we might shoot at the Alamo if we wanted to. I belonged to the crowd that managed the gun. We were delighted with the privilege of shooting at the Mexicans, and we pulled the gun to within four or five hundred yards of the Alamo fort. Captain Poe was in command of the artillery. We loaded the little gun and fired, and we hit the fort and knocked down some of it. We could hear the Mexican sentinels calling to one another, "*Centinela alerta!*" They did not return the fire that night. The next day we moved up to an old mill just below what is now San Pedro springs.<sup>2</sup>

Two weeks afterwards Stephen F. Austin became ill, resigned, and went back to San Felipe where he lived. We were told that he had to go to Washington, D. C.<sup>3</sup> Ed. Burleson took command.

<sup>1</sup>Brown (I 348) says it was a valuable four-pounder; but Holley's (*Texas*, 335) and Macomb's (Foote, II 99) statements, that it was a brass six-pounder, have been adopted by Kennedy (II 108), Yoakum (I 363), and Bancroft (II 166). See also QUARTERLY, II 314. The Texans had at least two cannon at the beginning of the operations about San Antonio: the one referred to above and another brass six-pounder captured at Concepcion (Bowie and Fannin's *Report*; Austin's *Report to General Council*; Morphis's *History of Texas*, 95, 107.) This statement is repeated by Wm. T. Austin (*Comp. Hist.*, I 552). However, Yoakum (II 16), followed by Bancroft (II 177), states, upon what authority is unknown, that at Concepcion "the Texans had but five pieces of small calibre."

<sup>2</sup>The Texans remained encamped at Concepcion from October 28 to November 2. During that time considerable reinforcements from Eastern Texas arrived, and on the morning of November 2, therefore, a council of war was held. It decided that the army should occupy such positions as would enable it to do the greatest injury to the enemy without exposing the Texans (*Texas Scrap Book*, 68). The army accordingly was separated into two divisions; the first under Bowie and Fannin remained at Concepcion, while the second under Burleson occupied a strong position on the east side of the San Antonio river about a mile above town (*Comp. Hist.*, I 554). That same day a detachment under Colonel Burleson occupied the mill (*Texas Scrap Book*, 68), which is located on the San Antonio river and not on San Pedro creek (QUARTERLY, IV 55). The two divisions of the army advanced to the old mill not long after—Yoakum (II 14, 15) says "four or five days." Filisola (*Memorias para la Historia de la Guerra de Tejas*, II 186) says the Texans occupied the mill on the 11th, having one cannon.

<sup>3</sup>On November 12, the Consultation elected Branch T. Archer, Wm. H.

While in camp at that old mill, we moved our cannon down and put it in an irrigating ditch. The Mexicans fired at us for several days. Their cannon were small, being four and six pounders. We returned the fire. I watched their balls hit, and when they got still I picked them up, and we fired them back at them. They never hurt any of us, and I do not know whether we hurt any of them or not.<sup>1</sup>

In about a week<sup>2</sup> Ben Milam called for volunteers to go into San Antonio and take it. There were about two thousand<sup>3</sup> men in the city. General Cos had command and Ugartechea was a brigadier, I believe, under him. Some two hundred<sup>4</sup> men volunteered, but before the affair ended about all our force were taking a hand. At first it was necessary for some to stay and guard the baggage.

It was some time in November or early in December, if I remember right,<sup>5</sup> when we started in to take the place. The nights were dark. We did not go by the open roads or streets, but we went through the old adobe and picket houses of the Mexicans, using battering-rams made out of logs ten or twelve feet long. The stout men would take hold of the logs and swing them a while and then let drive endwise, punching holes in the walls through which we

Wharton, and Stephen F. Austin commissioners to the United States (*Journal of Consultation*, 37). Informed of his election, Austin "ordered a general parade of the army to take place on the 24th instant, on which occasion he delivered an address in which he announced his determination to accept the appointment of commissioner to the United States and withdraw from the army" (*Comp. Hist.*, I 558).

<sup>1</sup>The incidents recited in this paragraph appear to have preceded Austin's resignation (*Comp. Hist.*, I 555, 556).

<sup>2</sup>On December 4.

<sup>3</sup>Burleson, in his report, states that the force of the enemy could not have been "less than thirteen hundred effective men." For further information concerning the number, see Bancroft, II 187, *note*.

<sup>4</sup>"The Texans who attacked the town numbered three hundred, and but seldom more than two hundred and fifty, during the fight of four days and nights. True, General Burleson, with the remainder of the army, maintained his position above the town."—F. W. Johnson's MS. *History of Texas* (*Comp. Hist.*, I 198).

<sup>5</sup>At daylight on the morning of December 5.

passed. How the women and children would yell when we knocked the holes in the walls and went in. It was dark; and by daylight all of the men were sheltered in these houses. We had dug our way through the houses until we were opposite the portholes in the barricades on the streets. We had holes punched in the walls so that we could see how to shoot. The guns in these barricades were pointed down the street, and we were on each side in the houses. They could not turn the guns around so as to shoot at us, but we could shoot at them over the walls of the barricades, and when one of them crossed in front of a porthole we shot at him. We moved our cannon into a street so as to knock down some of the barricades, and the fire of the Mexican cannon dismounted it.

We were about a week<sup>1</sup> fighting in those houses. On the third day of the battle our cannon was lying dismounted in the street, and General Milam wanted to get it out of the street so as to mount it again and use it. He went out in the street to show those who were trying to move the cannon how to work, when a canister shot hit him in the head and killed him.<sup>2</sup> Johnson and somebody else<sup>3</sup> took command after Milam fell. We dragged Milam in out of the street and put him in one of the houses. That same house is standing in San Antonio now.

After several more days fighting we captured the barricades, and the soldiers who had been behind them retreated into the Alamo. They soon put up a flag and called for a cessation of hostilities until a consultation could be held. After parleying they agreed to give up the fort with all its cannon if we would allow them their

<sup>1</sup>From daylight on the morning of the 5th till half-past six o'clock a. m. on the 9th.

<sup>2</sup>Others assert that he was killed "in the hour of victory, while reconnoitering with his glass for the final assault" (Thrall's *A Pictorial History of Texas*, 592), or "while leading a charge" (*Texas Scrap Book*, 38). In view of the discrepancies of these statements, most readers will perhaps prefer that made by F. W. Johnson, Milam's colleague, in his official report immediately after the battle: "At half-past three o'clock, as our gallant commander, Col. Milam, was passing into the yard of my position [the Veramendi House], he received a rifle shot in the head, which caused his instant death."

<sup>3</sup>Major R. C. Morris.

side arms. They agreed to leave Texas. We consented to this, they left, and we all dispersed to our homes.<sup>1</sup>

About February, 1836, they came back with a large force and attacked San Antonio, where Colonel Travis and Bowie and Crockett were in charge of the old Alamo fort. I was at home at Columbus, but on the 21st day of March, after the Alamo had fallen and Fannin and his men had been massacred,<sup>2</sup> I re-enlisted at Columbus under Capt. Moseley Baker, who had a company in Colonel Ed. Burleson's regiment of Houston's army, then retreating before the victorious Mexicans.

Baker's company was sent<sup>3</sup> to San Felipe to guard it, and Houston's army crossed<sup>4</sup> the Brazos above San Felipe at Groce's Retreat.<sup>5</sup> My company crossed the Brazos at San Felipe and threw up some little fortifications. After the Mexicans crossed the Colorado river, General Houston ordered us to cross over the river and burn<sup>6</sup> San Felipe. The people had already abandoned the place, leaving everything they had in the houses and stores. We obeyed our orders, but remained in camp on the east side of the Brazos opposite San Felipe, and placed a picket guard on the west side to give notice of the approach of the Mexicans.

In a few days,<sup>7</sup> the Mexicans came up. One morning about sunrise they captured Simpson, one of our pickets. The other three pickets, Jack Bell, I. L. Hill, and Pettus got away and crossed the river in a dugout. We had some skirmish firing across the river

<sup>1</sup>See Burleson's and Johnson's *Reports and Articles of Capitulation*; Brown, I 417-426; Thrall, 222-229.

<sup>2</sup>This should doubtless read "Fannin and his men had surrendered," for they were not massacred until March 27, but news of their surrender reached Houston on the Colorado. See QUARTERLY, IV 299, *note*.

<sup>3</sup>Rather Baker and his men refused to follow Houston up the Brazos, and so were left at San Felipe (QUARTERLY, IV 246, *notes 2-4*).

<sup>4</sup>Houston's army remained in camp on the west side of the Brazos at Groce's Ferry nearly two weeks before crossing (QUARTERLY, IV 246, 248).

<sup>5</sup>Groce's Ferry.

<sup>6</sup>QUARTERLY, IV 247 and *note 2*.

<sup>7</sup>On April 7.



at them. We would not let them cross, and they went down the Brazos and crossed at Richmond.<sup>1</sup> We were ordered to join Houston at Donoho's below Groce's Retreat, outside of the Brazos bottom in the edge of the prairie.

The scouts reported that Santa Anna had gone down to Harrisburg on Buffalo bayou, where he never halted, but, after burning the place, moved on down the bayou to a point opposite the mouth of the San Jacinto river, or rather below there. Houston's army followed, found Harrisburg burned up, moved on down the bayou, and went into camp just above the mouth of the San Jacinto river. The Mexicans came back up the river and some skirmishing took place on the 20th. They camped that night not far from Houston's army.

The next day in the evening, Houston ordered us to attack the Mexicans. Sherman on the left commenced the fight. We were all on foot except a small cavalry force under Lamar. We moved down a slope slowly, but when we started up a long sloping ridge (the Mexican breastworks were on the top of it), we all went in double-quick. Every one of us was yelling: "Remember the Alamo! Remember Fannin!" In a little while the Mexicans broke and ran. Just back of their camp was low marshy land and a kind of lake. Many of them tried to cross, but they bogged down, and we shot them. A few got through, and we captured them next day.

Capt. Moseley Baker told me on the morning of the 22nd to scout around on the prairie and see if I could find any escaping Mexicans. I went and fell in with two other scouts, one of whom was named Joel Robinson, and the other Henry<sup>2</sup> Sylvester. We had horses that we had captured from the Mexicans. When we were about eight miles from the battle field, about one o'clock, we saw the head and shoulders of a man above the tall sedge grass, walking through the prairie.<sup>3</sup> As soon as we saw him we started towards

<sup>1</sup>Then known as Fort Bend.

<sup>2</sup>James A. See note 3 below.—EDITOR QUARTERLY.

<sup>3</sup>"On the morning of the 22d \* \* \* a party was detailed and sent out under command of Gen. Burleson. This party proceeded in the direction of the bridge on Vince's bayou. \* \* \* When we reached the bayou, we divided into squads of five or six persons. \* \* \* The party I was with consisted of six, \* \* \*. Their names are as follows:

him in a gallop. When he discovered us, he squatted in the grass; but we soon came to the place.<sup>1</sup> As we rode up we aimed our guns at him and told him to surrender. He held up his hands,<sup>2</sup> and

Miles, Sylvester, Thompson, Vermilion, another whose name I do not recollect, and myself. From the bridge we started down the bayou. After traveling about two miles, we saw a man standing on the bank of a ravine, some five or six hundred yards from us" (Joel W. Robinson in *Texas Almanac for 1859*, 166).

Yoakum, who cites as his authority a letter from James A. Sylvester to the *Telegraph* of August 2, 1836, says: "On the morning of the 22d, detachments were sent out to scour the country toward Harrisburg, \* \* \*. A party of five, having reached Vince's, continued the search down Buffalo bayou. One of them, James A. Sylvester, while in the act of shooting a deer, discovered a Mexican pursuing his course toward the bridge" (Yoakum, II 146).

"Mr. Sylvester related, that he was, with two others, scouting near Vince's bayou, when, turning out of the road, some few deer were seen at a distance. 'Boys,' said one, 'stop here till I get a shot at those bucks.' Then riding cautiously through the skirt of the timber, at a proper distance from the deer, he dismounts, ties his horse, and, keeping his eyes on the deer, creeps cautiously towards them. All at once, he observes their heads and tails up, \* \* \* and suddenly they leaped off. As their heads were turned from him, he knew something else had caused their alarm. He returns, remounts his horse, and, beckoning to his companions to come up, he tells them that something had frightened off the deer, and he would see what it was; and, starting off, they soon come to the spot, when, after looking about, they finally discovered a man lying in the grass (N. D. Labadie in *Texas Almanac for 1859*, 59).

"At eleven o'clock a. m., while I was crossing a large plain, my pursuers overtook me again. Such is the history of my capture."—(Santa Anna's *Report*. Translation in *QUARTERLY*, IV 271).

<sup>1</sup>Robinson says: "He no doubt saw us first, for when we started towards him, he sat down on a high place, and waited till we came up"; and Yoakum: "He [Sylvester] called his companions and they rode up to the fugitive, who had fallen down in the grass, and thrown a blanket over his head." See references in note 3, p. 92, which will serve for all the remaining citations.

<sup>2</sup>"They called to him to rise, but he only uncovered his face. They repeated the request for him to rise two or three times, when he did so."—Yoakum.

"\* \* \* Riding up to him, they ordered him to get up. Manifesting fatigue, he appeared unwilling to rise. One of them then said, 'Boys, I'll make him move,' leveling his gun at the same time. 'Don't shoot, \* \* \*,' said the others; and, getting down from his horse, one of them gave him a kick, saying, 'Get up, \* \* \*.' The man then slowly arose."—Labadie.

spoke in Spanish, but I could not understand him.<sup>1</sup> He was dressed like a common soldier with dingy looking white uniform. Under the uniform he had on a fine shirt.<sup>2</sup> As we went back to camp the prisoner rode behind Robinson a while and then rode behind Sylvester.<sup>3</sup> I was the youngest and smallest of the party, and I would not

<sup>1</sup>"I was the only one of the party that spoke the Mexican language. \* \* \* I asked if he was an officer. No, he said he belonged to the cavalry."—Robinson.

"He advanced to Sylvester, and shook hands with him, \* \* \*. He [Santa Anna] inquired for General Houston; they said he was in camp. They then ask him who he was. He said he was a private soldier."—Yoakum.

"As none of them understood Spanish, they could not talk to him. \* \* \*." And on page 57, Labadie says, "Whilst I was \* \* \* dressing the wounds of the prisoners \* \* \*, Mr. Sylvester \* \* \* rode up \* \* \* conducting a prisoner. \* \* \* He desired me to interpret for his prisoner \* \* \*."—Labadie.

"On account of my change of apparel, they did not recognize me, and inquired whether I had seen Santa Anna."—Santa Anna.

<sup>2</sup>"Seeing the fine studs on the bosom of his shirt, they pointed toward them. He then said he was an aide to Santa Anna \* \* \*. He was dressed as a common soldier, and had no arms."—Yoakum.

"He had on a glazed leather cap, a striped jacket (volunteer round-about), country made, coarse cotton socks, soldier's coarse white linen pants, \* \* \*. His fine linen bosom shirt, and sharp-pointed shoes were all that did not correspond with a common soldier's dress."—Labadie.

"I found, in a house which had been abandoned, some articles of clothing, which enabled me to change my apparel."—Santa Anna.

<sup>3</sup>Santa Anna "asked me how far it was to camp. I told him eight or nine miles. He said he could not walk so far. The young man then wanted to kill him, \* \* \*. He then said he would try and walk \* \* \* some two or three miles. Santa Anna then stopped, and appealing to me, said if we wanted to kill him, to do so, but he could not walk any farther. I then took him up behind me, and carried him to camp, some five or six miles further. \* \* \* We entered into a general conversation. \* \* \* This brought us to camp. \* \* \*."—Robinson.

"As he complained of not being able to walk, he was placed on one of their horses, and conducted to the camp by some of the party, Sylvester going in another direction."—Yoakum.

"One of them gave him his horse to allow him to rest, while the other two rode by his side, till they got within half a mile of the camp, when he was made to dismount; the one who had walked on foot now resuming his saddle, proceeded alone with the prisoner to the camp, the other two returning to scout through the prairie."—Labadie. As will be seen by reference to note 1 above, Mr. Labadie says this one was Sylvester.

agree to let him ride behind me. I wanted to shoot him. We did not know who he was. He was tolerably dark skinned, weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds, and wore side whiskers. When we got to camp, the Mexican soldiers, then prisoners, saluted him and said, "*el presidente*."<sup>1</sup> We knew then that we had made a big haul. All three of us who had captured him were angry at ourselves for not killing him out on the prairie, to be consumed by the wolves and buzzards. We took him to General Houston, who was wounded and lying under a big oak tree.

The remainder of the story of the battle others have told. It is history. I have told what I saw as a young private; I was not seventeen years old. The causes of the discontent and the troubles with Mexico I did not then know. History tells all that. As a boy all I knew was that we had a row on our hands, and they wanted men to fight. I thought I could kill Mexicans as easily as I could deer and turkeys.

In 1842 I helped General Burleson whip the Comanches at the Plum Creek fight, and in 1848, during the Mexican war, I went out again under Claiborne Herbert. Still later, in 1861, I went again, this time to Virginia, and served in Hood's brigade in the Fifth Texas. During the war with Spain I was very much troubled because I was too old to go.

In testimony of which I hereunto sign my name this 31st day of May, 1900.

[Signed]

S. R. BOSTICK.

STATE OF TEXAS,  
COUNTY OF SAN SABA.

Before me the undersigned, a notary public in and for the county and State aforesaid, this day personally came Sion Record Bostick,

"This brought us to camp, when the Mexicans immediately announced his name. He asked to be taken to Gen. Houston, and was then taken to him."—Robinson.

"The distinguished prisoner \* \* \* was handed over to Colonel Forbes, at the guard lines; and \* \* \* desired to be conducted to General Houston. \* \* \* On the way, the Mexican prisoners exclaimed, '*El presidente*.'"—Yoakum.

Labadie says the Mexican lieutenant, whose arm he was dressing when Sylvester turned to go to General Houston with his prisoner, whispered to him, "*Est [sic] El Presidente*," and leaves the impression that Sylvester in person conducted Santa Anna to where Houston lay.

to me well known to be the person whose name is subscribed to the above and foregoing statement and after being sworn as to the truth of the statements therein made, declared the same to be true according to the best of his recollection and acknowledged to have signed the same and declared that he had done so for the purposes and considerations therein stated and set forth.

Witness my hand and the impress of my notarial seal  
[SEAL.]      at my office in San Saba county, this 31st day of May,  
1900.

JOE F. BROWN,  
Notary Public, San Saba county, Texas.